

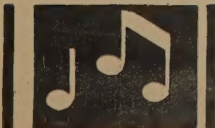
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LEARNING TO KNOW AMERICA'S MUSIC

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EXTENSION SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.



AMERICA'S NEGRO SPIRITUALS AND SONGS

From the 1931-32 National 4-H Club Music Achievement Series,
"Learning to Know America's Music"

How do you do, 4-H club folks and friends.

To-day we are to enjoy together the second program in the 1931-32 National 4-H Club Music Achievement Test which has as its central theme "Learning to Know America's Music." You will remember that last month we learned something further about America's Indian music. To-day we are to study America's Negro Spirituals and songs.

Washington Bicentennial March - Sousa

Before starting our study of Negro music, I am going to ask our friends of the United States Marine Band to play for us a composition which is associated with the other part of to-day's National 4-H Club Radio Program, which deals with the coming nation-wide celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Washington. It is the Washington Bicentennial March, by John Philip Sousa!

Now for our study of America's Negro spirituals and songs.

We are told that America has developed three types of music which are distinctively her own, namely, Indian music, cowboy songs, and Negro spirituals. Songs which have grown up around southern plantation life are probably more advanced than are the songs of the American Indian. And the banjo, the most popular musical instrument of the plantation, is much more intricate than the instruments which were used by the Indians. In Negro folk songs we find melody, emotion, and harmony--all of the elements that constitute the power of old-world folk music.

Old Black Joe - Foster

Notice how these three elements are blended in the Negro song Old Black Joe, by Stephen Collins Foster. Doubtless no plantation song ever had a greater appeal than this one, which is one of the most perfect of our entire list of composed folk songs.

DISTRIBUTION: A copy of this material has been sent to each State club leader.

The United States Marine Band, Capt. Taylor Branson conducting, plays as our first selection in to-day's National 4-H Club Music Achievement Test, Old Black Joe, by Foster.

It has been charged by some critics that the Negro music of the South is not American at all, but African. However, our Negro songs are largely the result of American environment, even though some of them may have been originated by Africans or Afro-Americans. Negro songs like ours are not found in Africa. It was the plantation, the river, the cabin, and the cotton field which furnished the setting for most of our Negro songs.

Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground - Foster

Through the medium of music, the Negro often expresses his emotions or sentiments. Note the melancholy tone in this next number, Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground, by Foster, as it is played for us by the United States Marine Band, Capt. Taylor Branson conducting.

"Goin' Home," from The New World Symphony - Dvorak

Dvorak was not an American composer, but our next number is about America and was written while this composer was in America. While here, Dvorak was much impressed by our Negro songs, and a part of his Largo from The New World Symphony is based upon two Negro songs which he learned to love. One of these is Goin' Home.

That part of the Largo from The New World Symphony, by Dvorak, which includes the Negro song Goin' Home is played by the United States Marine Band, Capt. Taylor Branson conducting.

Those of you who have before you the complete list of musical compositions to be used in this 1931-32 National 4-H Club Music Achievement Test, will note that we are making a slight change in that list. This change is necessary because of recent activities on the part of copyright owners. However, these changes will not seriously affect the list as a whole.

Golden Slippers (Spiritual)

Our next number is one originally scheduled for to-day. It is Golden Slippers. The plantation negro used music to give expression to his religious fervor, also, and this is one of the songs which he employed for that purpose. Doubtless no Negro spiritual is more widely known than Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, a song of the "Lower South." It is generally regarded as one of the most beautiful folk songs to be found in the musical literature of any land.

Golden Slippers is another Negro song of the religious type. It is played for us by the United States Marine Band, Capt. Taylor Branson conducting.

In order to truly appreciate Negro songs, one must hear them sung by the negroes themselves. The peculiar quality of voice and manner of singing are characteristic. It is but rarely that great success attends any attempt to imitate Negro singing. Undoubtedly, Negro songs appear to their best advantage when sung by a group of negro singers. Fortunately, however, Negro music lends itself well to orchestration, and so, when we can not hear the negroes sing, we can still enjoy listening to their characteristic music.

It is often impossible to discover the name of the composer of certain Negro songs. Many of those songs, like Topsy, just grew up. A worker in a cotton field would start a song, other workers would take up the tune, verse after verse would be added, and thus another song would be created.

"Nobody Knows de Trouble I've Seen,"
from Bandanna Sketches - White

Cameron White has named one of his compositions Bandanna Sketches, and from this composition we take our next number. It is the well-known song Nobody Knows de Trouble I've Seen. Here sorrow and religion are combined in a song which is much more dignified than are some of the Negro songs of the camp-meeting type.

Note the beautiful, plaintive melody in this music as the United States Marine Band, Capt. Taylor Branson conducting, plays "Nobody Knows de Trouble I've Seen," from Bandanna Sketches, by Cameron White.

Perhaps the organization which attracted world-wide attention to America's Negro music was the Fisk Jubilee Singers. These singers made concert tours throughout Europe and America. No discussion of America's Negro music would be complete without mention of their work.

A considerable number of Negro composers and solo artists have brought honor to themselves and still further recognition to America's Negro music. Among these are the composers, Coleridge-Taylor, Henry Burleigh, and Cameron White, and the singers Paul Robeson and Roland Hayes, who are on the concert platform to-day.

Juba Dance - Dett

But not all Negro music is given to song. Dance music has its place also. We find an example of this kind of Negro music in the Juba Dance, by Dett, which is played for us now by the United States Marine Band, Capt. Taylor Branson conducting.

Before we hear our last selection in to-day's National 4-H Club Music Achievement Test, may I tell you that during next month's National 4-H Club Radio Program at this same hour on Saturday, February 6, we shall study America's Patriotic Music. Members and leaders of 4-H clubs are urged to get in touch with their county extension agents or their State club leader and find out how they may participate in this National 4-H Club Music Achievement Test.

Uncle Ned - Foster

Our last number to-day, another typical Negro song, is Uncle Ned, by Stephen Collins Foster. You must have noticed how often the name of Foster appears in our discussion of Negro music. He was truly the folk-song genius of America. Although born in the North, he, early in life, developed an aptitude for writing songs of the South, of which he wrote about 160. No American composer has put more of the characteristics of Negro music into his compositions than has Foster, and his music has won the right to be classed with the best of the folk songs of any land.

The United States Marine Band, with Capt. Taylor Branson conducting, plays as our last number in to-day's National 4-H Club Music Achievement Test, Uncle Ned, by Foster.

